

AN

ORATION,

PRONOUNCED AT SUTTON, MASSACHUSETTS,

July 5th, 1813,

IN COMMEMORATION OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

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ORATION.

THANKS TO HEAVEN! The spirit of our fathers has not wholly left us! Still burns the vestal flame of freedom! Still do its guardians watch its preservation with unceasing vigilance! Year after year, we encircle the national altar to rekindle our patriotism, to repeat our vows, to confirm our holiest affections, our love to country, our gratitude to God. Blessed privilege! May posterity enjoy it! Sublime ceremony! May the feelings it inspires and the principles it inculcates, descend to the latest generation, glow in *their* breasts, and actuate *their* lives.

FELLOW-CITIZENS—The festival, we celebrate is glad, yet solemn. It is a season alike suited to rational joy and serious reflection. While in the retrospect of those events, which we commemorate, our hearts swell with exultation, it becomes us to cast an anxious eye into futurity, to ponder upon the duties we should perform, upon the course we should pursue, to secure to succeeding ages the blessings, that distinguish ours. Shall we taste these blessings, as if we *were* to drain the cup? Shall we bask in the sunshine of liberty, as if its *last* rays were to be shed upon us, heedless of those, who are to come after?

us? 'Twere sordid selfishness. Forbid it gratitude! Forbid it patriotism! Forbid it natural affection! Shall we content ourselves with the present enjoyment of our privileges, careless of their destiny hereafter? 'Twere criminal negligence. They may be wrested even from *our own* grasp. When the garrison slumbers, the strongest citadel may be surprised. Did we hold our liberties by an irrefragable tenure, indifference might well be excused. But there are gloomy moments, when they seem perishing from our possession. We have foes *without*, who assail them with open violence. We have foes *within*, who beset them with secret influence. Sleep over your danger, and you may wake no more! Slumber in the pathway of your duty, and you may either be roused by the shock of a civil convulsion, or the quiet of despotism will creep upon you, and lethargize all your faculties. Be vigilant and remain **FREE**,—or be indifferent and become **SLAVES**!

An awful crisis adds to the solemnity of this occasion. Upon its issue depend the destinies of our beloved country. At the return of another anniversary, shall we hail America triumphant, her wrongs redressed, her rights established, and her now dawning glory beaming in splendour upon an admiring world; or shall we mourn America disgraced, her rights surrendered, the charter of her independence forfeited, and her name a by-word amongst the nations? Is *this* a trifling alternative? Be assured, there is no medium. *We must conquer or we must submit.* The sword we have drawn, must carve out justice for itself, or it must return dishonoured to its scabbard. Delusive will be our expectations, if we build them upon generosity in our enemy. It is the character of Britain to oppress the weak.

and to trample upon the abject. She never accords satisfaction to those, who humbly sue for it. She often yields it to those, who resolutely demand it. To the submissive, she is haughty and unbending. Before the spirited she crouches. We learn this lesson from the page of history, and it is sanctioned by the experience of our ancestors.

We have made no wanton appeal to the God of battles. The injuries and indignities we have sustained, are before the world for our justification. You can all witness, how reluctantly the armour of defence was buckled on, how long the up-lifted arm of vengeance was withheld, how coolly our public councils deliberated upon the record of our wrongs, how calmly they returned remonstrance for aggression, and met outrage, but with complaint: till we were goaded to agony by the stings of wounded pride; till the patriot's heart throbbed with indignation, and his cheek crimsoned with shame; till the fiat of the people broke the spell that bound us, and proclaimed the commencement of a second struggle for the RIGHTS OF MAN. A little longer, and a fatal stupor had deadened all our energies. A little longer, and an active poison had corrupted the lifeblood of the nation. Our country had sunk beneath the load of her oppressions, and to us would have attached the damning guilt, the ever during infamy, of kindling the pyre of her liberties, and assisting in their sacrifice to the demons of avarice and ambition. O! that posterity may not mistake our forbearance for submission, our patience for pusillanimity! *That* forbearance is at an end. *That* patience is exhausted. We have risen from the posture of the suppliant, and assumed the attitude of the belligerent. Our fruitless murmurs have given way to the "note

of preparation, and the din of war." Since justice and reason are despised, our own right arm must be the terrible advocate of our claims. Shall we shrink recreant from the glorious conflict? Do we dread the giant strength, and the ferocious disposition of the foe?—We broke the tyrant's fetters in our infancy, and can he impose them upon us in our manhood? We are not thus degenerate. Americans know the value of their liberties, and every day proves that they have the courage, and the ability to defend them. Each hour, we listen to the tidings of some valorous achievement. The thunder of our cannon, is more commanding eloquence than the persuasions and arguments of diplomacy. Our seamen have grappled with the monster on his element, and *put a hook in the nose of Leviathan*. Our soldiers have planted the standard of independence, where frowned the ensigns of arbitrary power. The ocean is the cradle where rocks our infant navy, where our vain glorious antagonist had boasted that no soil could spread without his permission. The distant territories of the west have been the scene of triumph to our gallant warriors, where unpractised valour has won the wreath of victory from veteran skill. Inexperience and impetuosity have produced some blots upon our military escutcheon, yet they but faintly cloud the brilliancy of its reflection. We hail these happy omens. We rejoice, that this last and only republic has made a stand in the cause of violated law and oppressed humanity. But, alas! the sun of our glory shines not without a shade. The harmony of the national voice is interrupted by the clamours of opposition. The songs of triumph and the repinings of discontent, mingle their discordant echoes. Our ears are grated by the

cry of *peace, peace*, when there is no peace. When there should be united effort, we see counteracting operations. When the popular sentiment should flow like a mighty river, in one strong, steady, and irresistible stream, we behold conflicting currents and turbulent eddies. When the common character and the common cause require the exertion of the common strength, in these days, that again try the souls of our countrymen, one arm is raised in the necessary support of government, and another lifted to impede its motives, and menace its destruction. Strange infatuation! Surpassing folly! May some kind fortune interpose, to hide the melancholy spectacle from the world! Mark the enemy's malignant smile, whilst he witnesses with as much wonder, as satisfaction, the madness of his intended victim! The shafts we should spend upon him, we are aiming at each others' breasts! Brethren! Descendants from the same ancestors; who inherit equal privileges and share equal blessings, what impulse drives you to this ruinous discord? Why armed against each other, when you have an object, at which to direct your united forces? Search out the mystery, and profit by its developement. Trace the mischief to its source, and apply the remedy. Discard passion and prejudice, and let reason dictate the course to permanent harmony and security.

Does there exist, in the very midst of us, a foul conspiracy against our union, our constitution, and our democratic form of government? The proofs are before you. Examine them with an unjaundiced eye, and they will appear glaring as the light of day. Wicked men have combined to delude the unsuspecting and the weak. They have leaders of indefatigable industry and consummate artifice. Their

influence is as extensive as it is baneful. Their cunning has overreached honesty, and their sophistry has beguiled even prudence. For the *Catalines* of this combination, those who are plotting to build their own greatness on the general ruin, we can only feel abhorrence deep as their guilt. We must watch them as we would the suspected incendiary, else in some unwary moment, they may light the torch, that would wrap in flames the fair edifice of republicanism. But there are thousands, towards whom we would do well to cherish more charitable feelings. We see them following treacherous guides, and stumbling on the dark mountains of error; yet they think themselves travelling in the road of duty. Where invective would only urge them forward, persuasion may reclaim them. Where severity of censure would only irritate the passions that blind them, mild exhortation might at least, arrest the speed of their destructive career. If the life of every citizen is precious to his country, it is no slight object to render that life useful. To save one individual from the snares of delusion is worth long and patient perseverance. By such perseverance and unwearied diligence, the apostles of federalism have proselyted the multitude of their disciples. It is only to read the history of the party and you will cease to be astonished at the numbers, that rally round its standard. We have never refused to credit our political opponents, for their share of talents. They possess talents, and too successfully have they employed them. Their skill is as surprising in the choice of weapons, as their dexterity is matchless in their use. Superstition and prejudice, ambition and interest, have been successively

the instruments with which they have victoriously combated truth and reason.

Under a government like ours, the strife of parties is no evil, whilst they are restrained from outrage and excess. They have been compared to the winds, which purify the atmosphere, and to the agitated waves which prevent stagnation. When these winds blow a hurricane, and these waves are swelled into tempestuous billows, they spread death and desolation. When party becomes faction, and opposing sentiment is kindled into stormy passion, there is danger that their violence will prostrate our most venerable institutions. Are you exposed to this danger now? Do you see a tempest gathering, that may divide and scatter this united people, and are you at ease? Awake from your apathy. Put forth your strength, and you may check the factious spirits, that "ride the whirlwind and direct the storm." They will retire confounded, before the terrors of popular indignation.

Times of public difficulty and peril, are, to aspiring and unprincipled men, the most favourable opportunities to execute their schemes of aggrandizement. Such a period has now occurred. The occasion has been eagerly seized upon, and the conspiracy has advanced towards its completion, with alarming rapidity. We have suffered its germs, to grow and bud, and blossom; and the bitter fruit is now ripening for our repast. Never before, did disaffection assume a shape less questionable. Never did it speak a language less ambiguous. We shudder at the complacency, with which a portion of the public look upon its deformity. We feel amazed, that they do not startle at the horrid boldness of its speech. What says it

“The interests of the North and of the South are essentially different ; they ought never to have been united.”* “The Union of the States is only *one* of the objects of the constitution.”† “There is due to the commonwealth of Massachusetts, an allegiance, original, inherent, native and perpetual. The people have transferred a certain specified portion of allegiance, to a certain, *extrinsic association*, called the United States. This allegiance is conditional. The venerable name of government, the respect due to authority, the obtrusive pretensions of impostors in power, have misled many. Thank heaven ! the scales are fast falling from the eyes ! The snare of the fowler is broken, and New-England is escaping !”‡

These are not the idle and despicable ravings of ignorant fanatics. They are expressions, deliberately uttered by the lips and published by the pens of men, high in office, and eminent in reputation. They call themselves *Washingtonians*. What said Washington?—You have, or ought to have, his parting admonitions treasured in your memories. Recur, often to the volume, that contains them. There contemplate the picture, which he drew, as if by prophetic inspiration, of a party similar in its designs, its arts and its arguments to that, which now predominates in New-England. Did *he* tell you, that “one of the expedients of party to acquire influence within particular districts, is to misrepresent the opinions and aims of other districts ?” And are such misrepresentations, every day, addressed to your local feelings, and your local interests ? Did Washington tell you, “that the unity of government

* C. S. HILL.

† Answer of the House of Representatives to the Governor's speech, drawn by Mr. O'NEIL.

‡ QUINCY'S QUARTER.

was a main pillar in the edifice of your real independence ;” That it was “ easy to foresee, that many artifices would be employed to weaken in your minds, the conviction of this truth ;” that it was “ the fortress, against which the batteries of internal and external enemies will be most constantly and actively directed,” but that it was of such “ immense value,” that it could not “ in any event be abandoned ;” that there was no “ real difference of local interests and views, between the Northern and Southern, the Atlantic and the Western States ?” And are those Washington’s disciples, who would persuade you, that the interests and views, habits, and opinions of the different sections of the union are as irreconcilable as the jarring elements ; that the North will be enslaved by the South, and that the prosperity of the East is sacrificed to the anti-commercial prejudices of the West ! Can those be the genuine followers of Washington, can they sincerely venerate his precepts, who know how earnestly he strove to put us on our guard against “ all combinations and associations of whatever plausible character, in opposition to the constituted authorities ;” and yet associate themselves, for the very purposes he denounced, under banners, bearing the inscription of his name ? If this be true, then the absurd ceremonies, and the monstrous tyrannies of the pontificate were a display of christian humility ; the cruelties of the inquisition, were the offspring of christian charity ; the usurpations of the European despots are the extension of a system of republican liberty, and the sceptre of Napoleon is the symbol of freedom and equality.

Though you may heed not the warnings of the illustrious dead, though you may be equally deaf to the expostula-

tions of the living, can you be blind to the immediate consequences of a present dismemberment of the confederacy? It needs no prophet to foretel remoter evils. As certainly as any effect follows any cause, so certainly will anarchy, blood-shed and ruin, ultimately follow the execution of this mad revolutionary project. Should you however, be insensible to the welfare of your children, should you have no thought for the future respectability and honour of your country; yet, I beseech you, take the glass of contemplation, and observe the evils, that await *yourselves*. *They* are not in distant perspective; they are in the fore-ground of the picture. Suppose the Union divided. What a scene unfolds! The stately superstructure, the magnificent temple, which millions assisted to rear, whose stable columns were built upon the heroism and the virtues of a magnanimous people, and whose top-stone was placed by the hands of Washington and his cotemporaries, is rent in twain by an awful convulsion. Instead of one solid, stupendous fabric, we behold two shattered, tottering piles. Should they stand, they are but the melancholy remnants of former strength and grandeur. Should they fall, *the hopes of the world will be buried with them!* It is a fit spectacle for the traitor to gloat upon. It would gladden his eyes, and gratify the hatred of his heart. No wonder, he pants for the reality of the description. Long may the wisdom of the people disappoint his malice. May they examine with care, decide with coolness, bestow their suffrages on merit, and give their support to law, and there is little danger of their falling into fatal error.

How will the proposed division affect the prosperity of New-England? Will it remove present evils, or secure us

against future? Will it open anew the channels of commerce, and pour fresh streams of wealth into our complaining sea-ports? Will it render us more independent of Southern power and influence? Will it give us greater strength to resist the encroachments of British rapacity, or repel the assaults of French ambition? Will it add to the vigour and durability of our republican systems. Could we reasonably anticipate such consequences, could we readily discover such a panacea for all our ills, it were surely, worth some trouble to obtain it. We might, perhaps, be pardoned for yielding to the temptation, for quitting the path of our predecessors and wading through blood, to reach the promised land. But can those daring and artful men, who have flattered us to the brink of a tremendous precipice, and who now urge us to plunge into the gulph below, convince us that we shall alight in Elysian fields and taste of unalloyed felicity? My countrymen, beware how you foster such chimerical expectations! Pause, before you seek a refuge from slight calamities, in an act of political suicide. Once more survey the scene, upon which you are invited to enter. Do you discern one gleam of hope, to chequer the wide prospect of despair? Is there a solitary advantage, attending the train of evils which pass in your review?

A separation of the States would give us no relief from present burthens. We should feel a heavier pressure. There is no single cause, now operating to our disadvantage, which would cease to have its full effect. We should be no less exposed to the abuses of lawless power. Should the channels of wealth and commerce be again opened, they would be opened by foreign license and subjected to foreign tribute. Would we be wholly independent of the South

we must implore heaven to grant us a kinder soil and a happier clime, else, *as now*, we should ever turn our asking eyes towards more fertile regions, for the supply of our exhausted granaries. If the resources of the whole nation are yet inadequate to protect our flag from insult and our trade from plunder, how feeble, when alone, must be the contracted territory of New-England! How unable to defend its rights upon the seas! How much at the mercy of the great and growing States of the South and West! Not only should we be defenceless abroad, but we should be convulsed at home. Often would our own fatal example be imitated. Rebellion would put on the cloak of constitutional opposition. Commotion would follow commotion, and division succeed division, till the spirit of our institutions would perish with their form, till every generous sentiment and every republican feeling would be extinguished, and the storms of faction, at length, settle in the calm of tyranny. Once divide the great and consistent whole, which connects every variety of interests, and the State will crumble into a thousand weak and useless fragments.

Let us turn our eyes from this dismal survey of the effects of folly. Thank God! they are yet fictitious. We may yet steer our ship of state, wide of the threatening vortex. But we must trust the helmsman. If every raw hand and unskilful mariner aspires to seize the rudder, we shall soon lose the track of safety, and the deep waters will roll over the wreck of our liberties. In the right-onward course of constitutional order, there are no hidden harms, no lurking dangers. It will conduct us to possessions, more desirable for a free people, than extended empire or unwieldy wealth. We shall attain external strength

and internal tranquillity. We may breast the storm of war with firmness and meet the return of peace with gratulation. That every real republican would welcome this heavenly visitor to his arms, I solemnly believe. His wishes, like his interests, must tend to peace. Our country seems formed for the abode of peace. Our form of government is better suited to its calm, than to the tumult of war. Its cheering influence is as necessary to our comfort, in the political, as the sun-beams in the natural world. But there are times of dire necessity, when even the charms of peace must, with noble resolution, be abandoned. Though our eagle bears the olive branch in one talon, she grasps the arrows with her other. Will she patiently permit her pinions to be fastened, or her flight confined? Will she not spurn restraint, and soar at freedom, in her accustomed range? *To the preservation of unspotted national character, let every other object be sacrificed.* This is a golden rule, equally consistent with honour and with policy.

REPUBLICANS! ye who have past the ordeal appointed for the trial of your faith; who have maintained your orthodoxy, unshaken by persecution, unmoved by defection, unseduced by deceitful promises; your Country thanks you—Massachusetts will yet thank you. She will recover from her frenzy, and boast you as her saviours. To you, and the many thousands of your brethren in New-England, is it owing, that the incalculable mischief of disorder and disunion have not, long since, overtaken us. Your numbers and your constancy have checked the spirit of disaffection, and preserved the union from the unhallowed attempts of its enemies. Your own reflections will be your secret reward. Persevere to the end. The path of your duty is plain. Be not misled by the song of the charmer.

charm he ever so wisely. If your Fathers were right, if Washington was right, if your Constitution is right,—the principles of *Northern Federalism* must be wrong. They compose a new doctrine, introduced at a most unfavourable crisis. We are engaged in a desperate conflict without, in which even our national existence may be involved. It is, surely, no time to waste our force within, in doubtful discussions or hazardous experiments. Shall we uproot the tree, under whose shade and shelter we have grown great and happy? Shall we discard the system, which genius planned and experience digested, because it has not been omnipotent to save us from those disasters, which fall to the lot of every nation? Never. The people of the North will not thus rush, headlong, upon destruction, unless the intoxication of party is equally fatal to their patriotism and their common sense.

America is not destined to an early termination of her splendid career. She did not rise with bright and dazzling lustre, foretelling deliverance to the human race, so soon to set in everlasting night. For *this* her sages did not toil; her heroes did not bleed for *this*. She is reserved to consummate some higher purpose.—

“Westward the star of empire holds his way.”

When wretched Europe shall cease to struggle under the grasp of tyranny; when her exhausted and discouraged nations shall sleep the deadly sleep of despotism; when her fair displays of virtue, art, and science shall be lost in barbarous ignorance; then, MY COUNTRY, shall the imperishable structure of thy laws and liberties tower proudly above the flood of desolation, and the pillars of thy prosperity be immutable as the foundations of the earth.